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memorial coinage is to be that known as the Lotto portrait, which Mr. Henry Harris, a student who knows more about American history than all the sage authorities of our Government put together, has positively denounced as apocryphal. As long ago as last April, Mr. Harris wrote upon the subject to the *New York Sun* in the following positive terms:

* * *

That alleged portrait is held forth in a number of printed slips, newspapers, and magazines, as the work of the celebrated Venetian artist, Lorenzo Lotto, and as having been "painted from life, at Granada, in 1502," which date it is said to bear in clear and unmistakable figures. The present owner, however, states that "it was painted in 1501." The claim is urged, furthermore, in Italian and American periodicals with an array of unfounded and audacious assertions which call for a reply.

It is not true that Domenico Pisani was sent to Spain as an ambassador from the Venetian Republic "when the discoveries of Columbus became known in Venice."

It is not true that he went chiefly, or at all, "for the purpose of obtaining information for the use of the merchants of Venice concerning the commercial value, the resources and products of the newly discovered lands, and to obtain maps and charts for the benefit of Venetian navigators."

It is not true that Pisani "had a secretary named Giovanni Camerino or Cietrico."

It is not true that the said Camerino, or Cietrico, "obtained secretly from the discoverer a chart of the New World."

It is not true that "Pisani forwarded to his Government many voluminous reports concerning the discoveries of Columbus."

It is not true that "Lorenzo Lotto visited Spain while Pisani was there, and completed several important works of art under his patronage."

It is not true that there are sixteen (or any) examples from his brush now in the city of Madrid, painted in Granada, Seville, and other places during these years."

It is not true that the "history of the canvas may be traced back nearly three centuries."

As to the picture itself, viewed at least as a "portrait of Christopher Columbus," it is a sheer Italian fabrication, which, like all Italian forgeries, particularly those of Bolognese or of Venetian origin, proves too much.

Columbus is made therein to hold a map. That map is not, as we should have supposed, a map of his maritime discoveries. It is a map of Brazil, which he never discovered, or claimed to have discovered, or visited at any time. It is not even a Spanish map.

The process by which the forger came to insert a chart of that description is plain enough. He astutely inquired which was the oldest map of America. His informer, not knowing any better, showed him the *first engraved map* of the New World, which the falsifier immediately and greedily copied.

Unfortunately for himself and for his unsophisticated customer, that map happens to be nothing else than the mappimundi constructed by the German, Johannes Ruysch, in 1508, and published with the second issue of the Rome Ptolemy of that year.

This is shown by the fact that it sets forth the interesting conical projection of which the said mappimundi of Ruysch is the first instance; by the peculiar inclined position and shape of the Brazilian country, both of which have likewise been borrowed out and out from that geographer, including even his making of Trinidad one of the Cannibal Islands; by the appearance of Monserrate, which island is to be found with that name in no other old map than Ruysch's; by the continent being called "Terra Sanctæ Crucis," which is a vocable Columbus never dreamed of, and has been inscribed at no time on a Spanish map, chart, or globe; finally, by a complete identification based upon the degrees of longitude, which are traced and numbered in the pseudo Lotto portrait, "305, 310, 315, 320," precisely as in the Lusitano-Germanic map of Ruysch, although 305 degrees (of that scale, about our 60 degrees west), is the extreme limit of the continental coast of America ever seen by Columbus.

Now, that alleged effigy of Columbus, we are explicitly told "bears the date of 1502." How it can contain a map which came only into existence six years later, and when Columbus had been dead and buried, is one of those over-astute devices which rarely fail to betray the hand of the Italian sharpers who work with such zest and success for the American market, particularly at present.

In impositions of that kind the supply always proves adequate to the demand, and every two or three months we now see, miraculously exhumed from some "patrician collection," a pretended authentic portrait of Columbus, which is at once pounced upon by credulous amateurs. Nor can anyone tell when that iconographic influenza will cease to rage from the Adriatic to Lake Michigan. But if it becomes known in Italy that the aforesaid map has been shown to demonstrate the falsity of the Lotto portrait, so called, there is an even chance that ere long a duplicate will turn up about the Rialto. This time, however, in accordance with the well-known practice in such cases, this second edition will be duly bereaved of its awkward appendage. Yet it may be that the prospect of a remunerative sale being somewhat diminished by our "unpatriotic" disclosures, no new Lotto

portrait will be deemed worth while fabricating. If so, we must expect to see the advocates of the Veneto-Chicago picture manfully throw its bogus map overboard, then its bogus date, then its bogus log-glass, then the volume of Aristotle Columbus is made to rest upon, then we do not know what else, step by step, gradually as the demolishing of all those impudent inventions renders such painful abandonment absolutely necessary. Perhaps the Lotto connoisseurs, still undaunted, will cling to the map and claptraps, but represent these as later complements added by Leonardo da Vinci or Titian—nay, by Lotto himself, after he had returned from Spain, where, we make bold to say, the celebrated painter never set his foot, all interesting and bold asseverations to the contrary notwithstanding.

More yet could be said on the subject; but anyone at all conversant with the history of Columbus and of cartography will consider the above facts sufficient to prove the spurious character of that piece of canvas. Withal, it should be stated, in justice to the "Lotto portrait of Columbus," that it is neither better nor worse than any and all the other apocryphal daubs and portraits which are now being collected in Italy, in Spain, and in the United States by overzealous patriots, who do not seem to be aware that they are striving to make of history a delusion and a farce!

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It might be supposed that the word of a student and an investigator like Mr. Harris, a man who is accepted as an authority throughout the world—except in Chicago and Washington—would be worth listening to. But we do not want sages or prophets in America in this ta-ra-ra-boom-de-humb year 1892.

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It is announced that Spink & Son, the numismatists and medalists, of London, propose to send to Chicago as a loan exhibit a very interesting collection of coins and medals. It includes medals dated from the Norman conquest, 1066, to George II, 1760. They have between two and three hundred specimens which are not in the British museum collection. Among them are more than 130 gold pieces, many of which are unique. Among the rare ones are specimens of officers' medals for the victory over the great Dutch admiral, Van Tromp, by Admiral Blake. Also medals from the battle of Culloden against the Scotch in the rebellion of 1746; also a medal in gold commemorating the capture of Louisbourg. The entire collection is said to be the finest assortment of English medals that has yet been formed, and it numbers over 3,000 specimens in gold, silver, bronze, etc. It is valued at \$75,000. To this collection will be added a minor one consisting of coins, foreign medals and war medals.

LIBBIE & Co.'s NEW AUCTION ROOMS

THERE has been a sort of blank around the corner from Washington street, in Hayward place, for some time past, which Bostonians with bookish tastes have noticed sorrowfully. Mr. Stetson's Globe Theatre was in its place, and the gorgeous café under its wing was there with the usual Saratoga chips on the lunch table downstairs and the less digestible variety on the other tables upstairs. But the quaint auction rooms of C. F. Libbie & Co., so long a landmark of the little street, had become a thing of the past. They wound up their career in a blaze of glory, with some of the best auction sales, especially in the line of books and Americana, that have been made in this country, but they had grown too small for the business of the house, and with the expiration of the lease upon the premises the firm decided to remove.

It is, however, easier to resolve to open a new auction house than to find the place to open it in, and so the Hayward street removal left a gap of some months in the history of the house. The new location, however, has been secured, at 666 Washington street, at the corner of Beach street, up one flight of stairs. Here Libbie & Co. have ample quarters, with fine light for the display of paintings and engravings as well as books, and sufficient space for cataloguing and for the offices of the house. The rooms have been admirably fitted up with a view to setting off the objects to be sold, and what is far too rare in our auction establishments in New York and elsewhere, are well provided for in the matter of ventilation. Some sales of great interest now in preparation will be duly announced in THE COLLECTOR.

An interesting letter, the last written by John Wesley, was sold recently by Messrs. Sotheby, Wilkinson & Hodge, in London. The text was: "To the Board of Customs—Gentlemen: Two or three days ago Mr. Ireland sent me, as a present, two dozen of French claret, which I am ordered to drink during my present weakness. The White Swan Inn. It was seized—beg it may be restored to your obedient servant John Wesley, November 14, 1790. City Road. Whatever duty comes due, I will see duly paid." This touching appeal to the Board of Customs is indorsed "Rejected W. W." The writing is very feeble and broken, and the reference to the White Swan is not clear; possibly he wanted the claret sent there. This letter realized 22 shillings.